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PASS TO AID FOR AA/ANE J.KUNDER

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SUBJECT: STRONG POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR MOKHA PORT DEVELOPMENT

1. On February 2, 2005 a joint USAID-DOD JTF/HOA Civil Affairs team met the Governor of Taiz, Ahmed Abdullah Al-Hajri, to discuss public health and education services and quarantine practices in the Port of Mokha, a primary port of entry for livestock from the Horn of Africa (HOA). (Note: The governor is the brother of the Yemen Ambassador to the U.S., Abdul Wahab Al-Hajri. The governor's sister is President Saleh's senior wife. End Note). Hajri noted that he had been in Mokha the previous day to assess public reaction to the February 1 USAID-JTF/HOA CA team visit, complaining that the opposition had spread rumors about the visit, including USG plans "to keep animal disease in Yemen."

2. Commenting on the excellent U.S.-Yemen relationship, Hajri cautioned that such good-will is only understood at the official governmental level and not at the local "grassroots" level. He emphasized that the message must also be shared by the local people "who do not understand the value of the partnership." As an example, Hajri pointed to the belief of many local residents that the Asian Tsunami was God's punishment for U.S. aggression in Iraq. He expressed strong support for a USG project to improve inspection and quarantine of the thousands of animals arriving each month in the Mokha Port area, most of which are smuggled past official inspections. (Note: USAID estimates approximately 1 million animals arrive annually from HOA in Mokha, the majority are believed to be from Somalia, with 80 percent sheep and goats, 15 percent cattle and 5 percent camels. End Note).

3. Comment: USAID and JTF/HOA are working with the Ministry of Agriculture to assess options in the Port of Mokha. These may include conducting DoD Veterinary Civil Action Programs (VETCAPS) -- DoD veterinarians and other specialists who provide assistance to local livestock, vaccinations, vitamin "booster" shots, basic health care for diseases or injuries. A Medical Civil Action Program (MEDCAPS) may also be brought to provide basic health services. Another proposal under consideration is the creation of a new Yemen Livestock Commission that would be a public-private partnership, instituting programs to increase quarantine and reduce livestock smuggling, and expanding local health services. Public diplomacy efforts to reduce misinformation and improve public understanding of the benefits of USG's partnership with ROYG will be planned to compliment post's work in Mokha. End Comment.
Krajeski